



Traveling Help Desk



Congressman John Shimkus

Enclosures:

- Sample letter, franking approved, announcing the Traveling Help Desk
- Sample news release announcing the Traveling Help Desk
- Best Practices document providing additional information

Staff Contact:

- Steven Tomaszewski with Congressman Shimkus, 618-344-3065
- Alisha Perkins with Congressman Doolittle, 225-2511

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www.house.gov/shimkus

May 1, 2006

Mr. Sample P. Persons
123 Sample St
Apartment # 123
Sample 3rd Street Line
Sample 4th Street Line
Washington, DC 20001-1234

Dear Mr. Persons,

As you are aware, my office has been running a very successful program we call the Traveling Help Desk. Under this program, once a week a member of my staff goes to a town within the 19th Congressional District and holds office hours. During these office hours, individuals may come in and see a staff member about any problems they are having with the federal bureaucracy or share a concern over any issues in front of Congress.

The Traveling Help Desk will be coming to the Farina Village Hall on May 26, 2006 from 2:00 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. At that time, Dora Rohan of my staff will be available to listen to concerns and help with problems.

I have enclosed a few fliers about this visit for your use. I would like to ask for your assistance in posting these in any location you think would be helpful. My staff will be sending out a press release to the local media.

In addition, I want to bring to your attention the Donate a Phone program mentioned on the flier enclosed. If you know of anyone who has a used wireless phone, please have them bring it to the Traveling Help Desk. These phones will be donated, refurbished and used to assist domestic violence programs.

If you have any questions on this or if there is any other way I can be of service, please feel free to contact me. I thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,



JOHN SHIMKUS
Member of Congress

NEWS RELEASE

from the office of

CONGRESSMAN JOHN SHIMKUS

website: www.house.gov/shimkus

e-mail: steven.tomaszewski@mail.house.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 31, 2003

Contact: Steven Tomaszewski

618/344-3065; 322-9246

SHIMKUS' HELP DESK IN TROY AND WORDEN NOVEMBER 13

Collinsville, Illinois.....Do you have a question about your VA or Medicare benefits? Do you want your military medals that were lost or never received? Do you have tax questions or questions about any other federal government agency? Do you want your Congressman to know what you think about a proposed piece of legislation?

If so, come to the **Troy** Municipal Building, 116 East Market Street, on November 13 from 10:00 till 11:30 a.m. or the **Worden** Village Hall, 115 West Wall Street, on November 13 from 1:00 till 2:30 p.m. Congressman John Shimkus (R, Illinois-19) will be sending a member of his staff to meet with area residents in these communities.

Shimkus calls this service his "Traveling Help Desk," where you can seek assistance from his office. Appointments are not necessary; just stop in. Those unable to attend, but who wish to express a concern on legislation or need assistance with any federal agency, may write to: Congressman John Shimkus, 508 West Main Street, Collinsville, IL 62234.

"This service brings my office to your hometown," Shimkus said. "For updates from Washington right to your home or office, sign up for my weekly e-mail newsletter." To subscribe to the e-newsletter, log on to www.house.gov/shimkus and follow the link on the right under Stay Informed.

Congressman Shimkus' offices also serve as collection points for the *Call to Protect* (www.calltoprotect.com) program. Instead of harming the environment by winding up in landfills, used cell phones are collected and sold, with proceeds benefiting local domestic violence programs. Cell phones can be dropped off at any of Shimkus' offices and in Troy and Worden on November 13.

Persons requiring special accommodations should call (618) 344-3065 at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled office hours.

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Traveling Help Desk

Member: Rep. John Shimkus (IL-14)

Staff Contact: Steve Tomaszewski, Press Secretary
Craig Roberts, Chief of Staff

ABOUT THIS EVENT:

Congressman Shimkus has been conducting Traveling Help Desks throughout his district since first being elected in 1996. The Help Desks are targeted to small towns and villages in his largely rural district, but have also proven successful in more urban settings as well.

A Shimkus staffer is assigned to set up office in a chosen town for an hour and a half on a given day—usually the staffer does two towns the same day, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. We usually do one set of traveling help desks per given staffer every other month. We have a rotating list of towns that have been covered and those that still need to get the service.

Residents are notified by news release, which gets coverage in the local newspaper and often times the larger daily paper that covers the area, as well as the local radio stations. The office will also send the attached letter to households in the chosen town which usually keeps the mailing to less than 500 pieces. Franking has approved the letter and the office requests additional approval whenever more than 500 pieces are involved.

Most of the people who come in usually have a copy of their letter in their hand.

Shimkus district staff is set up to handle casework but also carry with them constituent concern forms by which they can transfer a constituent's opinions to the DC staff. Most of the people who come in, however, are in need of casework and appreciate the opportunity to speak one on one and in private about their needs.

Shimkus staff contacts the local Mayor, Village President, fire station, Farm Bureau, etc. to arrange for a location for them to host the Traveling Help Desk which helps to forge stronger ties to local officials. The Traveling Help Desk has proven to be a great success and is often times sited as proof by our constituents that the Congressman is performing his duties well.

PREPARATION

Who is involved?

The District Director is most involved because he or she chooses the place and time of the visit. The District Director also assigns a district staffer to handle the event. The Press Secretary is involved in terms of sending out media notices about the upcoming Traveling Help Desk. The Legislative Correspondent in the Washington, DC office is involved by coordinating the letters that will be sent to households in the town announcing the upcoming event.

Are any outside groups involved?

No.

Timeframe for preparation:

If the office is going to send out a mailing prior to the visit, we attempt to have at least a month of lead time to insure that the mail is delivered in a timely fashion. As Franking has already approved our base form letter, it never takes more than a day or so for them to approve the copy when necessary. Since the towns tend to be small in terms of population, we also take in consideration the printing needs of local weekly newspapers.

PRESS COMPONENT

What press did you invite?

We invite all the local media. A media advisory and a press release is sent out to all the local media, including major newspapers that cover that area as well. Special attention has to be given to printing deadline for local weekly newspapers. The Press Secretary will prepare a media advisory and press release to send to the local media.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

How often do you hold this event?

This program can be conducted as often as you like.

If district staff has access to a laptop computer, they can still make use of their time if there isn't a lot of traffic at a given stop.

We have found this to be a good public relations tool when reaching out to local officials—many of the issues people see us about actually are local issues and therefore if we're at the City Hall, we can get their issues addressed pretty quickly.

Folks on the other side of the aisle have observed this program and have used in their districts, some of which tend to be fairly urban, and they have directed their traveling help desks to local high rises, senior centers, etc.